

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01

SAM-01 IO-10 /081 W

----- 124367

R 061731Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7347

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 0061

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR POBR MO SS SP MR AG EG

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN VISITOR STRESSES CAIRO'S NEUTRALITY ON SAHARA

1. EGYPTIAN DCM INFORMED EMBOFF JAN. 6 THAT MAIN PURPOSE
OF VISIT OF EGYPTIAN MIN STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS MUHAMMAD RIAD
JAN. 4-5 WAS TO EXPLAIN EGYPT'S DELICATE POSITION
VIS-A-VIS SAHARA. HE SAID RIAD HAD TOLD KING THAT CAIRO
HAD BEEN UNDER "TERRIBLE PRESSURE" FROM ALGIERS AND, "IN
PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN ARAB WORLD", COULD DO NO MORE
FOR RABAT THAN ADHERE TO THE STRICT NEUTRALITY IT HAS DISPLAYED
THUS FAR. BY SAME TOKEN, EGYPT SAW NO ROLE FOR ITSELF
AS MEDIATOR. MOROCCANS UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED EGYPTIAN
POSITION INTELLECTUALLY, IF NOT VISCERALLY, IN EGYPTIAN
ASSESSMENT.

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2. KING HAD RELATED TO RIAD THAT HE HAD TRIED TO KEEP THE ALGERIANS CALM BUT BOUMEDIENE HIGHLY AGITATED AND UNRECEPTIVE TO ASSURANCES OF GOOD WILL, EGYPTIAN SOURCE ADDED. KING STATED HE NOT OPTIMISTIC ON CHANCES FOR FACE-SAVING COMPROMISE, ACCORDING TO SOURCE. EGYPTIAN SOURCE WENT ON TO COMMENT THAT EGYPTIANS -- AND OTHER ARABS -- SAW PAINFULLY LITTLE ROOM FOR COMPROMISE BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA. BOTH SIDES HEAVILY COMMITTED, HE EXPLAINED -- MOROCCO TO ITS ANNEXATION OF THE SAHARA, AND ALGERIA TO FOLLOWING THROUGH ON MAJOR ISSUE IT HAD CREATED. IN EGYPTIAN VIEW, ALGERIANS NOW HAD CHOICE OF ESCALATING WITH DECLARATION OF PROVISIONAL SAHARA GOVERNMENT, OR CONTINUING CURRENT "WAR OF ATTRITION."

3. WHILE RIAD WAS ACCORDED AUDIENCE WITH KING, AND SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS HAS FEATURED IN POSITIVE VEIN SADAT'S REPORTED REFUSAL TO GIVE ARMS TO ALGERIA, RIAD'S RECEPTION SEEMED MORE DUTIFUL THAN WARM. IN THIS CONNECTION, EGYPTIAN DCM NOTED HIS EMBASSY HAD HAD TO EXPEND CONSIDERABLE CLOUT TO PERSUADE GOM TO HOST MEAL FOR RIAD.

4. OPPOSITION ISTIQLAL PARTY PRESS REPORTED VISIT AS EGYPTIAN "RECONCILIATION" INITIATIVE ON SAHARA BUT GRUMBLED ABOUT FAILURE OF ARAB STATES TO INTERVENE POSITIVELY BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA.
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